PRRC emerging trends

Published by the Princeton Religion Research Center

Vol. 12, No. 8

oct. 90

R8920-1

# Laity Votes For Low Salaries For Clergy

When it comes time to set compensation around the community, the clergy ranks at the bottom of the list of a wide range of professions and occupations that were tested. Only one person in four (26%) believes that appropriate annual compensation for the clergy would be $40,000 or more. An additional one in four (26%) sets their compensation in the $30,000 to $39,999 range, but 37% of the populace believes members of the clergy should be content to receive under $30,000 annually. One person in 10 (11%) has no opinion on the matter.

Three people in four or more believe that physicians (79%), lawyers (76%), and engineers (73%) are entitled to annual compensation of at least $40,000. Many believe that pharmacists (61%), nurses (48%), and teachers (42%) should also be in the top-income bracket. People may gripe about their plumbing bills, but they also more often believe that plumbers should receive higher compensation than members of the clergy, with two in three (67%) saying plumbers should be paid $30,000 or more a year.

Opinions on compensation were obtained through the following question:

*"As I mention the name of an occupation or profession, would you please tell me the annual salary you feel people in that occupation should be paid in this community?"*

The results are from a survey conducted by Gallup for Phi Delta Kappa, based upon personal in-home interviews with 1,594 adults, 18 years of age and older, conducted in the period of April to May 1990.

## Opinion Of Appropriate Salaries

| | $40,000 & over | $30,000-$39,999 | $29,999 or less | Don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Physicians | 79% | 3% | 10% | 8% |
| Lawyers | 76 | 6 | 8 | 10 |
| Engineers | 73 | 11 | 6 | 10 |
| Pharmacists | 61 | 18 | 14 | 7 |
| Nurses | 48 | 26 | 18 | 8 |
| Teachers | 42 | 28 | 22 | 8 |
| Plumbers | 37 | 30 | 25 | 8 |
| Clergy | 26 | 26 | 37 | 11 |

# Is Religion Becoming 'Important' Again?

After declines during the 1970s and 1980s, the sense of the importance of religion in America may be reviving, according to the first survey taken on the question by Gallup in the 1990s.

Currently, 58% of Americans say religion is "very important," 29% consider it "fairly important" and 13% feel it is not "very important" to them. The sense of importance hit its low point during the 1970s when the average rating of very important was 52%. The average rose slightly to 55% in the 1980s, and may still be climbing. There is still, however, plenty of room for growth before the proportion saying religion is very important matches opinion in the 1960s when 70% considered it very important and in the 1950s when three Americans in four (75%) said it was very important in their lives.

In 1990, the only group matching the sentiment of the 1950s when three in four said religion is very important are 77% of those people who say they have been "born again", and 81% of the blacks who were interviewed on the survey.

Regionally speaking, the South leads the nation in the proportion of its people who consider religion very important in their lives (70%). Over half of the residents of the Midwest (57%) share this sentiment, but just half of those living in the East (51%) or West (49%) say it is very important to them.

Women more often than men say religion is very important, by a margin of 68% to 47%. Others attaching a high sense of importance to religion include non-high school graduates (71%), people who are 50 and older (70%), and those whose annual family incomes are less than $20,000 (66%).

## Importance of Religion

| | Very important | Fairly important | Not very important |
|---|---|---|---|
| **NATIONAL** | **58%** | **29%** | **13%** |
| **Gender** | | | |
| Male | 47 | 34 | 19 |
| Female | 68 | 25 | 7 |
| **Education** | | | |
| College graduates | 48 | 32 | 20 |
| Attended college | 53 | 30 | 17 |
| High school grads. | 59 | 33 | 8 |
| Non-high school grads. | 71 | 19 | 10 |
| **Race** | | | |
| White | 56 | 31 | 13 |
| Black | 81 | 16 | 3 |
| **Age** | | | |
| 18-29 | 43 | 42 | 15 |
| 30-49 | 55 | 30 | 15 |
| 50 and older | 70 | 21 | 9 |
| **Region** | | | |
| East | 51 | 36 | 13 |
| Midwest | 58 | 35 | 7 |
| South | 70 | 23 | 7 |
| West | 49 | 24 | 27 |
| **Income** | | | |
| $50,000 & over | 42 | 38 | 20 |
| $30,000-$49,999 | 53 | 32 | 15 |
| $20,000-$29,999 | 56 | 30 | 14 |
| Under $20,000 | 66 | 25 | 9 |
| **Preference** | | | |
| Protestant | 63 | 28 | 9 |
| Catholic | 58 | 33 | 9 |
| Born Again | 77 | 19 | 4 |

## Trend

| | Consider religion "very important" |
|---|---|
| 1990 | 58% |
| 1980s | 55 |
| 1970s | 52 |
| 1960s | 70 |
| 1950s | 75 |

# Moral Imperatives Receive High Endorsement

Despite all the talk and media reports about relativism and secular humanism and similar phenomena that suggest people may have lost their sense of values and their ability to distinguish between right and wrong, the great majority of Americans still adhere to a belief in moral imperatives. One person in three (33%) holds an absolute view that there are clear guidelines about what is good and what is evil and that these principles apply to everyone. An additional 52% say they mostly agree that this is true. Only one person in 10 mostly disagrees (8%) or completely rejects (3%) the existence of moral imperatives in life.

Blacks (45%) and evangelicals (45%) are those most likely to be in complete agreement that there are clear guidelines guiding our moral behavior. People under 30 (23%) are least likely to adhere to an absolute belief in such guidelines, but 63% of people from this age bracket do state that they "mostly agree" that they exist.

College graduates (16%) and the affluent (15%) are the segments of the population from which people who are prone to justify philosophically "bending the rules" of ethical behavior are most likely to be found.

Those who do say moral absolutes are a central tenet of their faith undoubtedly will be alarmed by the findings that two people in three believe there can be some degree of relativism in deciding what is good and what is evil. Those adhering unswervingly to belief in moral imperatives are unlikely to take any comfort even in the finding that 52% of adults "mostly" agree there are clear guidelines governing ethical decisions.

The question was asked as follows: *"Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with this statement: 'There are clear guidelines about what's good or evil that apply to everyone regardless of their situation. Do you completely agree, mostly agree, mostly disagree, or completely disagree?"*

The findings are from a Gallup Poll, conducted by telephone interviews with 1,236 adults, age 18 and older, conducted June 15-17, 1990.

## Belief In Moral Imperatives

| | Completely agree | Mostly agree | Mostly disagree | Completely disagree | No opinion |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **NATIONAL** | **33%** | **52%** | **8%** | **3%** | **4%** |
| **Gender** | | | | | |
| Male | 32 | 52 | 9 | 4 | 3 |
| Female | 35 | 52 | 7 | 3 | 3 |
| **Education** | | | | | |
| College graduates | 32 | 50 | 11 | 5 | 2 |
| Attended college | 34 | 53 | 6 | 5 | 2 |
| High school grads. | 33 | 56 | 7 | 2 | 2 |
| Non-high school grads. | 35 | 46 | 8 | 4 | 7 |
| **Race** | | | | | |
| White | 32 | 54 | 8 | 3 | 3 |
| Black | 45 | 43 | 6 | 3 | 3 |
| **Age** | | | | | |
| 18-29 | 23 | 63 | 8 | 6 | * |
| 30-49 | 37 | 49 | 9 | 3 | 2 |
| 50 and older | 36 | 50 | 7 | 2 | 5 |
| **Region** | | | | | |
| East | 33 | 50 | 8 | 5 | 4 |
| Midwest | 32 | 54 | 10 | 2 | 2 |
| South | 35 | 53 | 6 | 2 | 4 |
| West | 33 | 53 | 8 | 4 | 2 |
| **Income** | | | | | |
| $50,000 & over | 29 | 55 | 11 | 4 | 1 |
| $30,000-$49,999 | 28 | 60 | 7 | 4 | 1 |
| $20,000-$29,999 | 38 | 49 | 8 | 2 | 3 |
| Under $20,000 | 35 | 50 | 6 | 3 | 6 |
| **Preference** | | | | | |
| Protestant | 35 | 52 | 7 | 2 | 4 |
| Catholic | 32 | 56 | 7 | 3 | 2 |
| Born-again | 45 | 46 | 5 | 1 | 3 |

*Less than one-half of 1 percent.

# Church Membership Holds Steady

The proportion of Americans who claim church membership has been remarkably constant over the decades. In the first Gallup audit of the 1990s, 69% of adults say they are a member of a church, synagogue or similar religious congregation. This matches the average membership of 68% during the 1980s and 70% in the 1970s. Earlier, from the 1930s through the 1960s, membership was slightly higher, averaging 73% to 74% on Gallup Poll audits.

The highest claims of church membership are found among those who say they are "born again" (82%) and the Catholic faithful (81%). Seven in 10 Protestants in general (71%) say they have formal church affiliation.

The regions with the highest proportions of their population who are church members are the Midwest (76%) and the South (74%). In the East, membership is at the national average of 69%, but church affiliation dips well below that average in the West, where only 54% of the residents of that region claim membership.

The membership rolls swell as the population ages. Least likely to be members are young adults who are ages 18 to 29 (62%). Membership climbs to 67% of those people who are 30 to 49, and the houses of worship attract three in four (75%) of those who are 50 and older as members.

Women are somewhat more likely than men to be church members, by a margin of 72% to 66%.

## Trends—Members

| | |
|---|---|
| 1990 | 69% |
| 1980s | 68 |
| 1970s | 70 |
| 1960s | 73 |
| 1950s | 73 |
| 1940s | 74 |
| 1930s | 73 |

## Church Membership—1990

| | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| **NATIONAL** | **69%** | **31%** |
| **Gender** | | |
| Male | 66 | 34 |
| Female | 72 | 28 |
| **Education** | | |
| College graduates | 70 | 30 |
| Attended college | 69 | 31 |
| High school grads. | 68 | 32 |
| Non-high school grads. | 69 | 31 |
| **Race** | | |
| White | 69 | 31 |
| Black | 71 | 29 |
| **Age** | | |
| 18-29 | 62 | 38 |
| 30-49 | 67 | 33 |
| 50 and older | 75 | 25 |
| **Region** | | |
| East | 69 | 31 |
| Midwest | 76 | 24 |
| South | 74 | 26 |
| West | 54 | 46 |
| **Income** | | |
| $50,000 & over | 66 | 34 |
| $30,000-$49,999 | 67 | 33 |
| $20,000-$29,999 | 68 | 32 |
| Under $20,000 | 68 | 32 |
| **Preference** | | |
| Protestant | 71 | 29 |
| Catholic | 81 | 19 |
| Born Again | 82 | 18 |

# Majority Of Americans Touched By A Power Outside Themselves

A majority of Americans (54%) say they have at some time been aware of or in the presence of a power outside themselves. The percentage saying that they have felt such a presence is 10 percentage points higher than in 1985, possibly reflecting a greater willingness to talk about such experiences.

Indeed, it is noteworthy that the highest incidence of this awareness is found among the well educated, a group which generally records the lowest frequency of religious awareness and belief. Awareness of an outside presence is found among two in three of those who graduated from (65%) or attended college (68%). By comparison, only 49% of high school graduates and 37% of non-high school graduates gave similar reports. As the latter groups often include many who usually report high religious belief and practice, it is somewhat puzzling that they would be less inclined to report awareness. It may be possible that the concept of an "outside power or presence" is an abstract expression unfamiliar to some, and so even if they have had such an experience it would not be reported. Accordingly, the true incidence of awareness may be even higher than recorded by the survey.

No significant difference in awareness is found between Protestants and Catholics, but Born-Again Christians (63%) are among those most likely to report they have felt the presence of an outside power. Women are more likely than men to have felt such a presence, by a margin of 58% to 48%.

The question was asked as follows: *"Have you ever been aware of, or influenced by, a presence or a power—whether you call it God or not—which is different from your everyday self?"*

The findings are based upon a Gallup Poll conducted by telephone interviews with a randomly-selected national sample of 1,236 adults, 18 and older, in June 15-17, 1990.

## Aware Or Influenced By Outside Power

| | Yes | No | Don't know |
|---|---|---|---|
| **NATIONAL** | **54%** | **42%** | **4%** |
| **Gender** | | | |
| Male | 48 | 47 | 5 |
| Female | 58 | 38 | 4 |
| **Education** | | | |
| College graduates | 65 | 33 | 2 |
| Attended college | 68 | 28 | 4 |
| High school grads. | 49 | 47 | 4 |
| Non-high school grads. | 37 | 56 | 7 |
| **Race** | | | |
| White | 54 | 41 | 5 |
| Black | 52 | 47 | 1 |
| **Age** | | | |
| 18-29 | 53 | 45 | 2 |
| 30-49 | 63 | 34 | 3 |
| 50 and older | 44 | 49 | 7 |
| **Region** | | | |
| East | 46 | 48 | 6 |
| Midwest | 54 | 41 | 5 |
| South | 56 | 40 | 4 |
| West | 58 | 40 | 2 |
| **Income** | | | |
| $50,000 & over | 61 | 36 | 3 |
| $30,000-$49,999 | 60 | 37 | 3 |
| $20,000-$29,999 | 53 | 44 | 3 |
| Under $20,000 | 47 | 50 | 3 |
| **Preference** | | | |
| Protestant | 55 | 41 | 4 |
| Catholic | 53 | 42 | 5 |
| Born-again | 63 | 33 | 4 |

*Advertisement*

## *Now available . . .*

# Religion in America 1990

**Religion In America 1990** highlights trends in religious beliefs and practices, as well as the public's view on the impact of religion on society. Many of these indicators have become basic and standard measurements of the state of organized religion in the U.S.

The report also presents a detailed analysis of church attendance and membership by key population groups and by major faiths and denominations. Because no other organization regularly measures America's churchgoing habits, The Gallup Poll has lent its fact-finding service for this purpose.

Also included are demographic profiles of the major faiths and denominations, as well as trends in religious preference and identification.

A special commentary by George Gallup, Jr. explores the implications of recent survey findings for America's churches, as we move into the final decade of the 20th century.

The cost per copy is only $30.00, plus $2.00 for postage and handling. Make checks payable to Princeton Religion Research Center, P.O. Box 389, Princeton, New Jersey 08542.

EMERGING TRENDS is published monthly except July and August by the PRINCETON RELIGION RESEARCH CENTER. The Center, founded in 1977, is an inter-faith non-denominational research organization with headquarters in Princeton, New Jersey. The PRRC specializes in creative actionable research, utilizing the worldwide attitudinal and behavioral facilities of Gallup International. The purpose of the PRRC is to gain a better understanding of the nature and depth of religious commitment in the U.S. and abroad and to explore ways this information can enable religious leaders to promote spiritual growth. A one-year subscription can be obtained for $35.00. Inquire: **Publications Department, P.O. Box 389, 100 Palmer Square, Princeton, New Jersey 08542 (Telephone 609/924-9600). PLEASE NOTIFY US OF ADDRESS CHANGE.**

**PRINCETON RELIGION RESEARCH CENTER**
100 Palmer Square, Suite 213
P.O. Box 389
Princeton, New Jersey 08542

FIRST CLASS
POSTAGE
**PAID**
Permit No. 175
Plainsboro, NJ 08536

**First Class Mail**